

**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT  
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION  
RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP, Monday, October 6, 2008  
5:00-8:30 P.M., Osceola County Extension Service, 1921 Kissimmee Valley  
Lane, Kissimmee, FL**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

This is a summary of the WRAC Recreation Issues Workshop on October 6, 2008, at the UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension Service in Kissimmee, FL. This report will be posted on <http://my.sfwmd.gov/wrac>.

**Future Presentations (from previous meetings):**

- Holiday Park (Broward County) Update
- Everglades National Park General Management Plan Update

**Introduction:** David Lithgow, Chair, WRAC Recreation Issues, welcomed everyone and stated the purpose of the meeting. Rick Smith, WRAC Facilitator, explained the function of the WRAC Issues Workshops and WRAC ground rules for meetings.

**Item 2: Rolling Meadows Restoration Status – David Colangelo, Sr. Env. Scientist, Kissimmee Division, SFWMD:**

**Discussion:**

- Removal of barrier at Catfish Creek? SFWMD: will review as design proceeds.
- Schedule for 30% design? SFWMD: December '08/January '09.
- Phase IV Backfilling Kissimmee River Restoration: Need to monitor response of vegetation.
- USACE: Current plans for next phase do not include earmarked funding for monitoring. (Follow-up: The SFWMD is responsible for evaluating Kissimmee River restoration. Phase I, Kissimmee River Restoration is being actively monitored. Vegetation mapping will be done for subsequent phases. Intent is to restore the natural hydrology of the area so that the ecosystem will be restored).
- Source of funding for acquisition of Rolling Meadows? SFWMD ad valorem funds.
- Future access? SFWMD: Kissimmee and Land Stewardship Divisions will work together on that after restoration is completed. Current plan is to hold up to 18" of water on the site.

**Item 3: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Recreation Development – Steve Coughlin, Div. Director, Land Stewardship, SFWMD:**

- **Chair:** After reviewing comments from the August 11, 2008 meeting, SFWMD staff developed a proposed recreation plan to expand recreational opportunities in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.

- Steve Coughlin summarized the proposed plan.
- **Important Note:** There was majority agreement on several issues, as noted below, however,
  - After the summary, questions/answers and discussion, a private landowner stated he could not agree to moving forward with the proposal as a package; and,
  - Several representatives of recreation interests advocated providing more opportunity for hiking, bird watching and kayaking/canoeing; and, keeping the Drasdo tract closed to hunting.
  - SFWMD was notified by e-mail after the meeting that the Kissimmee River Valley Sportsmen's Association could not agree to moving forward with the proposals as a package.
- **Areas of Agreement:**
  - Designate hiking and kayaking trails.
    - **Majority agreed to move forward with this recommendation.**
  - Prohibit the harvest of antlerless deer
    - **Majority agreed to move forward with this recommendation.**
  - Prohibit deer dogs; allow hog dogs and retrievers.
    - **Majority agreed to move forward with this recommendation.**
  - North and South marsh areas on East shore and West Shore of Lake Kissimmee proposed for small game, turkey, waterfowl and hog hunting.
    - **Majority agreed to move forward with this recommendation.**
  - Establish statewide hunting season dates:
    - **Majority agreed to adopt State wide hunting season dates.**
  - Recommend the FWCC establish the properties as a managed area, preferably a designation similar to the Kissimmee Public Use Area.
    - **Majority agreed to have FWCC establish the area as a managed area.**
  - Hog Hunting at night (on areas open to hunting):
    - **This has been a traditional hunting activity and sportsmen disagreed with staff proposal to prohibit hog hunting at night.**
    - **Landowners questioned enforceability.**

- **Areas Without Full Consensus:**
  1. Continuation of deer hunting on Northwest Shore of Lake Kissimmee
    - **There was not full consensus on shotgun only proposal.**
    - **Landowners objected to allowing continued deer hunting.**
  2. Expand hunting and access on interior of portion of Johnson Island Marsh.

**There was not full consensus on this issue.**

    - **Airboaters and sportsmen objected to the north/south proposed airboat line be established where airboats would be allowed to operate south of the line.**
  3. Open 580-acre Drasdo Tract to hunting (currently closed).
    - **No consensus on Drasdo.**
    - **Passive recreation interests and landowners supported no hunting.** There needs to be a place of refuge for wildlife and area can be accessed by kayak/canoe.
    - **Sportsmen supported opening area to small game, turkey and hog hunting.**
- **Chair: Next Steps -**
  - Staff will review comments and propose recommendations for areas of disagreement.
  - Will present staff recommendation to WRAC, November 6, 2008, SFWMD, West Palm Beach; and on December 3, Key Largo Hilton, Key Largo, FL
  - Will be presented to the SFWMD Governing Board, December 10 or 11, SFWMD, West Palm Beach.

**Item 4: Land Stewardship Division Update – Dan Cotter, Planning Supervisor, DSL, SFWMD – Discussion:**

**Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Region:**

- Request to add primitive camping site on east side of canal near Drasdo. SFWMD: Area is existing canal right-of-way maintenance area and cannot designate camping in the right-of-way.
- No sanitary facilities being provided? Existing primitive sites often are very unsanitary because no facilities are provided. SFWMD: Plan is to designate primitive sites with no facilities. We'll post sign re: "Pack-it-in/pack-it-out". Primitive camping is sporadic, seasonal and there is no access on SFWMD property to provide for servicing of restroom and picnic facilities. Would need access permission from private landowners
- Need site at C-34/Lake Cypress. SFWMD: We have an easement but do not own the levee.
- Need to identify site near Drasdo. People already camping out there but don't want violation. FWCC/SFWMD: SFWMD public use rule

requires camping only at designated sites; otherwise, FWCC will issue a violation. Staff will review plan and consider designating a camping site within Drasdo.

- Need to add designated camping site at Rough Island near existing shelter. SFWMD: Will review and add site to plan.

**Istokpoga Boat ramp:**

- Issue with county about charging user fees not yet resolved.

**Everglades Headwaters Working Group:**

- Group created to establish a Blueway/Greenway from Shingle Creek to the Everglades.

**Airboat Crossing Ramps:**

- Need to redesign crossings, especially in the Stick Marsh, to prevent erosion of road and reduce impact on vessels are not safe.
- Chair: Would be built right if done by user groups.

**Item 5: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Land Management Update, David Birdsall, Sr. Environmental Analyst, DSL, SFWMD –**

- Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Management Plan has been approved by SFWMD Governing Board
- Controlled burning goal – 5-10,000 acres/year
- Whooping cranes on southeast side of Lake Kissimmee
- Need to stop theft of picnic benches and fire rings. Have placed 18 benches and 10 fire rings. Only 2 left.
- Chair: Has Wood Stork colony moved? SFWMD: Yes. To near Lake Russell. Need to be aware of other endangered species habitats.
- Some areas of high (oak groves near water bodies) use are badly eroding. Canopy will likely die back because of soil eroding away from the roots.

**Comments:**

- Urban turf fertilizers: Working to draft legislation prohibiting phosphorous in urban turf fertilizer in south Florida. Need to support.
- Nutrient pollution of south Florida waters is a big problem. Most people are putting out 100 times more phosphorous than needed to sustain healthy plants.

**Future Meetings:**

- **December 15, 2008, Building B-1 Auditorium, West Palm Beach, FL, 5-8:00 p.m.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.**